

# APPENDIX A

## DEFINITIONS

*These definitions are conventional explanations;  
they may vary depending on state law.*

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### Affidavit

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A sworn statement in writing, usually made under oath or affirmation, before an authorized officer, notary or court official.

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### Attest

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To witness the signing of a document.

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### Ballot

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A sheet of paper or the like on which a voter marks his or her choice.

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### Closed Primary

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A primary election in which a voter must declare a political party affiliation and vote that party's ballot in the primary election.

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### Congressional District

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A division of a state, based on population, electing one member to the U.S. House of Representatives. There are 435 Congressional districts in the United States.

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### Constituent

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Those citizens who are represented by the office holder they elect.

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### Constitutional Amendment

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A proposed change or addition to a state constitution.

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### Domicile (Voting Residence)

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The place where a person has a true, fixed, and permanent home or ties, and to which, whenever absent, has the intention of returning. It is the address that generally ties the voter into the precinct in which the voter intends to vote.

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### Elector

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A qualified voter. Also used for the 538 members of the Electoral College.

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### Electoral Vote

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The votes cast for President and Vice President by presidential electors in what is known popularly as the Electoral College. The total electoral vote is 538, with 270 needed to win the election. Traditionally, by law or custom, the candidate who wins the most popular votes in a state wins all of that state's electoral votes.

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### Electronic Transmission Service

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Processing center which electronically routes applications for registration and ballots to local election officials; blank ballots to voters; and voted ballots to local election officials, as prescribed by state laws. The Service is administered by the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

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### Federal Ballot

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Lists candidates for Federal office only — President/Vice President, Senator, and member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

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### Federal Post Card Application

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A simultaneous registration and absentee ballot request used by U.S. citizens voting pursuant to the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act*.

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### Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot

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A special ballot, available from Voting Assistance Officers, enabling voters to write in their candidate preference for President/Vice President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. Representative/Delegate. Some states have expanded use of this form beyond these offices. Consult Chapters 2 and 3 of this *Guide* for details.

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**Full Ballot**


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Lists candidates for Federal, state and local office plus local questions and issues.

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**General Election**


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An election held to choose candidates nominated in the primary (or by convention or caucus), for Federal, state, and local office.

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**Majority**


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A number greater than half of the total votes cast.

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**Members of the Merchant Marine**


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Crew members of ships registered under the U.S. flag, including persons in training or enrolled to be crew members, but in most states not including those on ships confined to the Great Lakes and inland waters. Students of the Merchant Marine Academy are not included.

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**Members of the U.S. Armed Forces**


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Members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This includes Cadets and Midshipmen of the Service academies.

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**Municipal Election**


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An election held in a city or town to vote for local officials or on questions of local interest.

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**Notary Public**


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A person who is authorized to administer oaths and to take acknowledgments.

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**Open Primary**


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A primary election in which voters may vote for the candidates of any party listed on the ballot.

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**Party Platform**


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A statement of basic principles put forth by a political party, usually at its national convention, to be adopted by its candidates in the election campaign.

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**Plurality**


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The number of votes cast for a candidate who obtains the greatest number of votes, though not a majority, in a contest of more than two candidates.

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**Popular Vote**


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The numerical vote of the people, as distinguished from the electoral vote.

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**Presidential Electors**


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In the Presidential election held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of every fourth year, each state chooses as many presidential electors as it has Senators and Representatives in Congress. The District of Columbia chooses three presidential electors. The electors comprise the Electoral College, which elects the President and Vice President, the only elective Federal officials not elected by direct majority vote of the people.

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**Primary or Primary Election**


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An election held before a general election to nominate a political party's candidates for office. In some states, other officials, such as delegates to party conventions, are elected at this time. Dates for primaries are set by the states and vary from state to state. In some, a separate primary is held by each of the principal parties; in others, only the major political parties hold a primary.

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**Proxy**


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A person authorized to request or complete registration forms or to obtain an absentee ballot on behalf of another person. A proxy may not cast a ballot for another person.

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**Referendum**


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A method of submitting a legislative measure to the voters for approval or rejection.

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**Registration**


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The process whereby a prospective voter is required to establish identity and residence prior to an election in order to be declared eligible to vote.

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**Residence**

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The place where a person currently resides, regardless of an intent to remain there permanently. (see *Domicile* above)

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**Runoff**

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An election held in some states if no one candidate for an office receives a majority (or specified percentage) of votes to win the election.

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**Special Election**

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An election that is specially scheduled to fill an office that has become vacant before the term of its expiration.

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**State**

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For purposes of this *Guide*, “state” includes all of the following political jurisdictions:

- a. The 50 states
- b. The District of Columbia
- c. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
- d. The territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.

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**State Special Write-In Absentee Ballot**

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Available from local election officials and used by certain voters who know in advance that they will not be able to receive and return the regular absentee ballot in time to be counted because of their remote location or special assignment.

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**Sworn To**

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A statement “sworn to” is one made under oath or affirmation before a notary or other authorized person that the statement is true.

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**Voting Residence**

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The voter's domicile, generally. However, the voting residence of a U.S. citizen voting pursuant to the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act* and no longer domiciled in the United States will be the place in which he or she was last domiciled immediately prior to his or her departure from the United States.

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**Write-In**

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A method of voting for a person whose name is not on the ballot. Federal and state write-in absentee ballots are available — see your Voting Officer and State *Guide* pages for details.

